THE ULTIMATE DRAGON WARRIORS ZINE

CASKET OF FAYS

ISSUE SEVEN

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A Shipload of Trouble

Jonathan Hicks and David M. Donachie

An Adventure for characters Rank 4-5

A hard day's ride north of Clyster sits Whinby, a small coastal settlement of fishermen and shipwrights, nestled inside a cove with beaches stretching for miles in either direction. It enjoys a plentiful bounty of fish, and many along the coast of the Mergeld Sea come to the town to utilise their excellent shipbuilding skills as well as take advantage of the trade that passes through.

Seven years ago, the Thulish pirate Gorus the Golden sacked the town, slaying many and taking much. In many ways Whinby is yet to recover. Its once dynamic lord, Baron Aelthlin, lost his wife Miraben in the attack and has since become a much diminished man, old and grey, hiding behind his locked doors. His children — ambitious Simon (Rank 2 Knight), and compassionate Maedelwyn (Rank 2 Knight) — have done what they can to rebuild the town, but the scars (overgrown ruins, a field of graves facing the sea, widowed mothers) still remain.

Aelthlin is haunted by the fear that Gorus might return, though no one has seen the raider since that night. Only the Baron heard the curse that Miraben placed on the pirate with her dying breath (see *The Curse,* below); he knows that this is not over. He spends freely on mercenaries and hire-swords, though most are of dubious quality. His current captain, Paulus (Rank 1 Barbarian), in particular, is a born coward; happy to take the old baron's money, but not to fight. The show of strength has at least made Whinby a popular stopping point for merchant vessels and land trade alike. Although a small town, many travellers from all over visit; for the purposes of equipment availability, it is the equivalent of a Castle.

The Storm

One night, as the town settles down for a quiet summer evening, an unexpected storm approaches from the sea. The horizon is suddenly changed from a clear sky to a black smear of cloud and rain, and the flashes of lightning are constant. The storm rushes towards the coast and takes the townsfolk by surprise; they rush to secure boats and moorings, battening down hatches, and lashing closed doors to weather the storm.

It is incredibly violent. The wind howls and the lightning roars, the rain is thick and blinding, and for a while, the denizens of Whinby are terrified that they are about to be washed away. Many gather in the only inn in the town, the 'Black Flagon', bar the door, and huddle around the huge firepit to nurse their ales with worry. *It's just like that night, seven years ago, when Gorus came!* they mutter. Any PC asking will get a quick rendition of the tale of the Thulish attack.

History does indeed appear to repeat itself, as a land-bound bandit, Tiriol Tidewater (Rank 4 Assassin), takes advantage of the storm to stage his own raid on Whinby. A boy bangs at the tavern door and, when let inside, gasps that Thulish raiders are stalking the streets! The townsfolk turn to Paulus for aid, but the cowardly Captain just hunches over his drink.

If the PCs brave the storm, they will soon discover that the 'raiders' are actually common brigands in makeshift Thulish disguise (Rank 1 Humans in light armour (AF1) wielding swords and shields). When Maedelwyn arrives with a few loyal retainers, she offers the PCs five gold for every bandit they bring down, double for Tiriol. However, fighting in the storm is hard. Every combatant has a +3 to every Hit Roll made, and there is a 20% percent chance every round that flying debris may hit someone for 1d3 Health Points of damage.

Midway through the battle, Tiriol's forces suddenly vanish, though they still had the advantage of numbers (the GM can tailor the numbers to suit his party). If the PCs pursue them through the storm, they will discover their fate early (see below), otherwise the dawn makes the situation clear.

The Shipwreck

The storm still rages when morning comes, but Whinby sits in a strange eye of calm. (Both the sea and land routes out of town are blocked.) Visible from town is the rocking mast of a Thulish longship, which appears to have come aground on the northern coast. A few locals brave the looming storm to investigate — even Thulish sailors deserve to be rescued — but will turn back quickly when the truth becomes clear.

The long beach is fine golden sand, the morning sea is cold, and the storm has beached a lot of debris, but the shore where the boat awaits is awash with blood that the sea has yet to clean. The fate of Tiriol's bandits is now clear; their bodies scatter the sand. They appear to have been advancing on the longship when they were cut down to a man, shot with arrows or hacked apart by axes. Anyone paying close attention will realise that there are no traces of whoever did the killing, not even a footprint in the sand.

The Longship

On closer inspection it is clear that this is no living ship. The wood is covered in barnacles and draped with weed. The hull is cracked, splintered, and holed, and the sails are tattered rags hanging like shrouds. Nevertheless, the ship is still afloat, as if the land itself rejects it, and each incoming wave edges it closer to Whinby itself.

When someone approaches the ship (one of the townsfolk will if the PCs do not), the true horror becomes clear. Undead raiders pour from the hulk, crashing ashore with a ragged roar. These dead men are as rotted as their ship, barnacle-studded and corrupted. They wield axes, roundshields, and black bows, and there seem to be no end to them!

> GORUS THE GOLDEN – Rank 5 Undead Barbarian
> Attack 18 — Battleaxe (d8, 6), Defence 10, Magical Defence 7, Health Points 17, Evasion 6, Stealth 15, Perception 7, Armour Factor 3

> CREWMEMBER – Rank 1 Barnacle Men
> Attack 12 — Axes (d8, 4), Defence 6, Magical Defence 3, Health Points 7, Evasion 3, Stealth 13, Perception 7, Armour Factor 4 (Shield)

The raiders fight without fear, heedless of their own safety. Although PCs face no more than six raiders at any one time, the supply is endless — no

sooner is one cut down than their soul is dragged back to the ship, crawling out of the treasure pile in the hold one round later.

Luckily, the curse placed on the crew binds them to their ship; if they give chase they will become weak, and the farther they get from the vessel the worse they become, reducing their stats by 1 for every ten feet. If the PCs retreat one hundred feet, the undead retreat.

'It's the Dragonspit', gasps the eldest of the townsfolk in the rescue party. 'That's the ship that raided Whinby seven years ago and took everything from us; gold, goods, ships, and souls. Why has the sea belched this monstrosity back out? Is it tormenting us?'

The rescue party makes for the safety of Whinby, but it's clear that when the tide turns, in seven hours, the hulk will be carried into the harbour and all its evils released once more. Once Maedelwyn hears the news, she begs the PCs to help.

The Curse

With her dying breath, Miraben cursed Goren and the Dragonspit, that they would find no safe harbour, or ever to take pleasure in the gold they had stolen. The raiders laughed and took their treasure, but they never found another port. Every time they tried to land, either bad weather or an enemy ship would find them and turn them back. After a year adrift, a storm rose and sank the ship to the bottom of the sea, but the crew endured. Now they have returned on the anniversary of their raid, desperate for an end to their torment, but driven by rage and anger to repeat the very act that led to their destruction. If the PCs cannot find a way to break the curse before the tide turns, Whinby will be sacked a second time.

Breaking The Curse

There are only two ways to break the curse. Either the stolen treasure must be removed from the Dragonspit or Baron Aelthlin must forgive Gorus for his wife's death.

Maedelwyn has known about the curse since she was a girl and can take the PCs to the Baron, but years of fear and grief have twisted the old man's mind. Despite his love for the town, he cannot bring himself to lift his wife's curse. Persuading him otherwise will take a great feat of eloquence. But if Aelthlin makes it to the shore and declares the curse ended, the Dragonspit founders at last on the shore, and the crew fall to dust.

Another possibility is to return the treasure to the town. The reavers will resist an attack on the ship, bursting from the silver-pile as soon as they fall, but if the PCs are willing to take the risk, they might be able to remove the treasure after the ship reaches the harbour and the raiders storm the town. There are 50 items for encumbrance purposes, which may take multiple trips. When the final coin is removed, a terrible wind will drag the damned crew back aboard and out to sea.

It is possible to remove the treasure without a fight, if the PCs can just persuade Gorus to allow it (talking to him is a lot easier at the limit of his travel from the ship). Although the captain is as cursed as his crew, he might be made to see reason. A PC wise in Thulish lore could name the treasure *weregild* for the raider's crimes. If the raiders give up the gold, they board their ship a final time and vanish with the dawn.

One final option would just be to wait out the raid behind barred doors. The church, or at a pinch the Black Flagon, could be defended through the course of the terrible night, though the rest of Whinby will be devastated in the process. Come dawn, the Dragonspit retreats into the mist, but the town is in ruins. Worse is the suspicion that, in another seven years, the raiders

will return again, and so on down the years until someone braver than the PCs finds a solution to the curse.

Conclusion

If the PCs find a way to break the curse, they will find themselves with a significant haul of gold, silver, and jewellery. This is the bulk of the stolen wealth of Whinby, an Average hoard of Cash, Gems/Jewellery and Magic Items.

Maedelwyn would see the treasure returned to the people. Simon plots to use it to restore the family fortune, and his inheritance (if you wish to play out the consequences, Captain Paulus makes a better ally for Simon than a defender of the town).

Returning the treasure will earn the PCs the undying gratitude of the town. They will be welcome in the baron's keep and in the Black Flagon, where they will not have to pay a penny for board, food, or any services any time they are in town.

Of course, the PCs don't have to give it back…

From Mortal Combat, the Bola

Lee Barklam

For this foray into the inspiring pages of the Mortal Combat RPG, I decided to bring back a new weapon to Dragon Warriors, the bola.

What is a Bola?

A bola is a thrown weapon made of weights on the ends of interconnected cords. Typically, a bola has three balls, each attached to one end of a knotted Y-shaped cord. The two heavy balls at the front strike the target first and the third (typically lighter) ball attached to the long "stem" of the Y-shaped cord then wraps around the target, entangling them. There are, however, as many variations as there are cultures that use them - some with up to nine balls!

Why Include the Bola?

Dragon Warriors combat is mostly a case of resolving ATTACK vs. DEFENCE until someone runs out of Health Points. The bola provides a new option for disabling an opponent without necessarily harming them. We could extend this with options for non-lethal melee damage, striking to stun, grappling, and other non-lethal attacks, and these may very well be the topic of a future article, but we have to start somewhere.

Who Can Use the Bola?

Drawing parallels with Earth, the bola would not commonly be found in Albion, so it may not be a familiar weapon to an Albish knight, for example. It is most likely to be found in the hands of the barbarian and hunter professions and professions unique to the exotic lands whence this weapon comes (wherever that may be in your Legend).

The Mechanics

Bolas have the range of a javelin (15m/25m/35m) and do damage as a rock (d3, 2). However, the value of a bola is not in the damage that it causes but in its potential to debilitate.

Once struck, the target tests EVASION against the bola's SPEED of 15 to avoid becoming entangled. As with any EVASION test, the victim must be aware of the attack to be able to move to avoid the entangling effects of the weapon. If the target fails to evade (or is unable to evade), roll 1d6.

<table>
<tr><th>d6</th><th colspan="2">Result</th></tr>
<tr><td>1-2</td><td colspan="2">Legs are caught and the victim falls over.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Left arm is pinned to body.</td><td rowspan="3">The target must test Reflexes or drop anything held in the hand of a pinned arm.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Right arm is pinned to body.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>Both arms are pinned to body.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td colspan="2">Neck caught and damage is dealt to the head (d3 ABR vs. head armour, double damage). Target will start to suffocate after a number of rounds equal to their Strength score.</td></tr>
</table>

To free themselves, the victim must test Reflexes each round. If an arm is pinned, Reflexes is tested with a -3 penalty (-4 if it is the target's dominant hand) or, if the neck is tangled, -1. If both arms are pinned, escape is not possible without assistance (at least, not within the timeframe of combat). After three successes, the target is free of the bola. If the target has a high Strength (16+), only two successes are required.

If the target is struck but not entangled, the bola might still cause damage (d3, 2) but will not entangle the target.

Some Final Notes

Why SPEED 15?

Mortal Combat uses saving throws to resist the entangling effects of the bola, and the save vs. entanglement is 35% for a first-rank Mortal Combat character. A first-rank Dragon Warriors character typically starts with an EVASION in the range of 3-5. SPEED 15 vs. EVASION 3 requires a 13+ to avoid on 2d10 (28%). For a character with EVASION 5, this is reduced to 11+ (45%).

Bola vs. Tangleroots

The bola is not the only way to entangle and disable a victim in Dragon Warriors, the second-level sorcerer spell *Tangleroots* achieves something similar (SPEED 14, immobilised for 2d4 rounds). Referees looking for a simpler mechanic when introducing the bola into their game can simply treat the bola, once it has successfully hit its target, as a *Tangleroots* spell.

Double Damage to the Head

Buried in the Bestiary, in the rules for the *Grey Hood*, it is noted that attacks that strike the head cause double damage, which seemed appropriate here.

Foraging – A Revision

Wayne Imlach

This is a revision and expansion of the incomplete Foraging rules found in the Player's Guide. Rather than limit foraging to Hunters exclusively, any character may attempt to forage, though the Hunter profession remains the master of this craft.

After one hour of foraging, a Hunter must roll equal to or under Perception on a d20. Professions with the Track skill (Knights, Barbarians, and Assassins) make this roll with 2d20 and use the highest valued die. All other professions make a foraging roll with 3d20 and use the highest valued die.

Note that if a human character is foraging during the day, be sure to include the +5 bonus to Perception that daylight provides, as well as the 'Favoured Terrain' ability of the Hunter, if applicable.

Every 10 points of success (or part thereof) generates 1 day of sustenance for a single person. For example, if a character with a Perception score of 18 rolls a 4, they have succeeded by 14 points and find 2 days worth of sustenance.

The time of year and terrain type adjusts the difficulty of foraging as indicated in the chart below.

Fecund Terrain:	+10 Perception (very easy)
Fertile Terrain:	+5 Perception (easy)
Normal Terrain:	No modifier (normal)
Barren Terrain:	-5 Perception (difficult)
Desolate Terrain:	-10 Perception (very difficult)

	Spring	Summer*	Autumn	Winter**
Forest	Normal	Fertile	Fecund	Barren
River	Normal	Normal	Fecund	Normal
Plains	Normal	Normal	Fertile	Barren
Hills	Normal	Normal	Fertile	Barren
Marsh	Normal	Normal	Normal	Barren
Swamp	Barren	Normal	Normal	Barren
Mountains	Barren	Normal	Normal	Desolate
Tundra	Barren	Barren	Normal	Desolate
Desert	Desolate	Desolate	Desolate	Desolate
Arctic	Desolate	Desolate	Desolate	Desolate
Ocean* **	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal

* If the Summer of a given year is unusually hot and is accompanied by a drought, increase the foraging difficulty of the terrain type by one step for both Summer and Autumn.

** If the Winter of a given year is unusually cold and is accompanied by a deep freeze, increase the foraging difficulty of the terrain type by one step for both Winter and the following Spring.

*** This presumes suitable fishing equipment or nets.

Folk Magic of Ferromaine and Surrounds

Damian May

Scudo del Madri
Cowrie and scallop shells are often given minor enchantments as protective devices for children and women due to their supposed resemblance to female genitalia. (+1 Magical Defence)

Guardiano del Occhio
Eye glass beads and other items with eye decorative motifs have long been considered valid remedies against the evil eye from prehistory to the present day; the staring eye supposedly bends the evil gaze back to the sorcerer. (+1 MD and reduces the d12 Fright Attack from the Spell Evil Eye to a d6 Fright Attack. After reducing a Fright Attack, the Guardiano del Occhio loses its enchantment. Of course, the bearer has no way of knowing this unless the object is magically inspected.)

Ancora di Cadavere
Assorted items (usually miniature depictions of tools, animals, and religious iconography) often made of amber, bronze, or malachite, used to help stop the dead from rising as undead. Some also double as wards to prevent demons or spirits from possessing the remains.

Warding Ancore are placed in outer parts of the burial, such as the entrance to the tomb or on a surrounding fence, are used to prevent the deceased from exiting the grave, or a malevolent force from entering. (An undead, demon, or spirit sighting the object is subject to a d12 Fright Attack that, if successful, means it cannot approach the item.)

Standard Ancore placed in/on supposed critical locations of the corpse, the orifices, joints, etc., act both to protect the deceased from possession and to prevent him/her from coming back as undead. (The object cannot be

removed by the undead it is placed upon, and each object placed reduces their movement speed by 5m. Each object acts as a Warding Ancore in regard to possessing entities approaching the corpse.)

Creation (knowledge of their creation is somewhat widespread throughout Asmuly and surrounds and it is likely other regions have similar traditions):

Scudo del Madri: cost 20 Crowns and 28 days to make, and may be manufactured by a 4th Rank Sorcerer, Demonologist, Warlock, or Elementalist.

Guardiano del Occhio: cost 50 Crowns and 28 days to make, and may be manufactured by a 6th Rank Sorcerer, Demonologist, Warlock, or Elementalist.

Ancora di Cadavere: cost 30 Crowns and 28 days to make, and may be manufactured by a 6th Rank Sorcerer, Priest, or Mystic

Dragon Warriors - A Personal Perspective

Shaun Hately

Hello Shaun. Please can you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm a schoolteacher and aspiring author living in Melbourne, Australia - I teach gifted (very smart) kids for a living and rely on the social interaction and mental stimulation I get from gaming to keep me sane.

Tell us about your very first experience with Dragon Warriors. The why, the where, the how.

I started playing and running games of D&D when I was seven - the old blue box basic D&D, and I really enjoyed it. But D&D was really expensive in child-level budget terms - a single scenario cost me months of pocket money. I was constantly begging my parents for money to buy game books. When I was either ten or eleven, I was at Robinsons Bookshop in Frankston (a well known independent bookshop here - it was a proper bookshop, crammed with nooks and crannies) and while looking at the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks in the children's section at the back, I saw the first three Dragon Warriors books on the same shelves. "The Ultimate Roleplaying Game" legend at the top caught my eye. I leafed through and realised that, yes, this was a proper RPG, not just a gamebook. And from memory, it only cost $3 or $4 dollars for each of the books - for comparison, the AD&D Players Handbook I'd been wanting was about $30 from memory. I could get a book every couple of weeks! I was with my Dad and I showed him, and he immediately doubled my pocket money so I could up that to a book a week - he knew these games meant a lot to me, and was probably also sick of me begging for much more money.

When I got home, I read the first book from cover to cover straightaway. The first thing that grabbed me was this was a rules system that felt a little less abstract to me than D&D - the 'comic strip' that showed how the combat system worked really drove home how you could visualise every step of the fight. Did I hit? YES! Now did the shield block? NO! Did I

penetrate the armour? YES! As opposed to D&D - “I hit Armor Class 6…” OK, I missed, but why did I miss? Was it a lousy blow? Was it the shield? Was it the armour?

But it was “The King Under the Forest” that really got me. Compared to the published D&D scenarios I’d seen - which wasn't many because of money - it was just so evocative. And I knew enough of classic literature and history, to immediately make the Vallandar and Arthur connection. I also loved the 'treasures of the kingdom' and wanted to throw that clever little disappointment at my players as soon as possible.

Where did you go from there? The 80’s, 90’s and so on. Did you leave DW for a while and come back, or have you been there all along?

I had some fairly miserable times in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was not a happy childhood in a lot of ways - the year I was twelve - 1987 - was particularly hellish. Gaming was my relief from my real life problems, and was the only place I found it at all easy to find friends - and that has remained true all my life. So I've gamed as much as I can since then. But it wasn't always Dragon Warriors. There was a period from 1987-1990 or so, where it was definitely the game I played most, but that was with other kids who, like me, had been drawn to the game, in part, because it fit our budget. Most of them, once they had the money, wanted to shift over to AD&D, and I went with them out of necessity more than anything else - not that I dislike it, but it was a matter of it being much easier to find people to play with. In the mid 1990s, I was lucky enough to fall into a group of people who, while we still played a lot of AD&D, and then D&D once they dropped the A, were willing to try and play other games, and the core of that group is now the core of my regular gaming group. We've

played so many different games and Dragon Warriors is periodically part of that mix when it's my turn to GM. I also ran Dragon Warriors a couple of times at local conventions in the late 1990s.

When Dragon Warriors was revived as a living product in 2008, I started running it consistently at least once a year at local conventions. I found a lot of people joining those games because they remembered the six little books from their early gaming life.

Tell us about a memorable character that you've played or someone has played in one of your games?

Leaving aside Mistress Marta, who I've never actually played except as an occasional NPC, but who I created for 'Friends or Foes'... I haven't had as much chance as I'd like to play characters in DW. I've nearly always been the GM. But I'm currently participating in an online game run by Stephen Keightley where we are playing through the classic 'Sleeping Gods' campaign (although he's added an immense amount to it), and I'm really enjoying playing a Sorceress called Hariot. She's very young - she left Ongus where she was an apprentice to Mistress Marta, as soon as she could escape the city without Marta dragging her back because of her age. And she set out to see the world, walking all the way to the north of Albion before falling into adventure. I love this rather prim and proper city girl who is proving a lot tougher than she ever expected to be. She's always a little shocked when one of her spells actually works - she Fossilised somebody a couple of sessions ago, as a rather desperate last ditch action and was honestly astonished that the spell really did what the book said.

What's your favourite DW scenario?

It is 'The King Under the Forest', but if I take away the strong nostalgia bonus that the first one gets, 'A Box of Old Bones' would be very close.

How did the Yahoo group come about?

I was reading a Dragon magazine and it mentioned there was a 'list-serv' list for AD&D - ADND-L - which I immediately joined. About 1995 or 1996. Immediately I wanted a similar type of place for Dragon Warriors. I searched around for some free way I could do this - I was a near penniless university student at the time and I went through a few different free services - I can remember names like graffiti.net, makelist, and coollist, existing then dying or being swallowed up by Yahoo. About the same time I also set up 'The Unofficial Dragon Warriors' homepage on geocities - another free service that Yahoo eventually swallowed. Again, there was nostalgia for the old game (although it was only about a decade since it had been a new game).

When did the Library of Hiabuor come about?

One of my childhood dreams was to be a 'real games designer' - by which I meant, a 'properly published' one. I wrote a few little unofficial things I put up for download on the web in the 1990s but it wasn't until James Wallis asked me if I'd put together an introductory/convention scenario for the new Dragon Warriors release that I had anything released in any proper sense - that was 'A Weak Pleasure' which I co-wrote with Mark Turner, one of my regular gaming group. But then - I got the chance to submit ideas for the official sourcebook that would become 'Friends or Foes' and three of my ideas were accepted, and that was the moment I'd felt I'd achieved my childhood dream - I'd been paid for game writing that was in a real book from a real publisher, and I was also given the chance to contribute to what eventually became the 'Player's Guide'. Anyway, that was the period where I decided to set up a proper DW webpage - unlike my ancient and increasingly dated Geocities based page. The Cobwebbed Forest - brilliant page - had also appeared by then, I think, and that probably inspired me as well. And finally, I could see that e-mail lists were

on the way out and I thought a web-based forum might be more used - which it was, although Discord and Facebook are now more prevalent.

Other DW resources - any recommendations?

I've already mentioned 'The Cobwebbed Forest' which I think is the best DW website out there - unless there is something I have missed. And the Discord and the Facebook group are both really useful too. 'Casket of Fays' is great - a sustained zine - not speaking specifically about DW here, I just know how many zines get started on all sorts of topics and produce only one issue... which is fine if that was the intention, but often it wasn't.

What does Legend hold for you in the future, and what do you hope for Legend in the future?

I am really looking forward to the upcoming new material - 'Brymstone', 'The Cursed King', and - of course - I have a very, very personal interest in seeing 'The Summoner's Tale'. I have a couple of projects of my own ongoing - designing a GMs screen for my own game (which I will share) and finishing a partly completed Gazetteer of Albion - I'll be going straight back to work on that in a minute - for use in my own game (although again, I will share it with others). I have also - for about nine years now - been slowly working on a novel set in Ongus, the capital of Albion. It's basically fanfic which, if it is ever finished, I'll likely release under the Serpent King fan licence. It's kind of a kid's book - although it's already nearly 300,000 words - it's really aimed mostly at the type of very clever kids I teach. And it's fun for me - it's allowed me to explore some theories of magic in the game I have... and to get to know Ongus much better than I did.

Spark Tables

Dominic Bailey

In his excellent RPG, Electric Bastionland, Chris McDowall provides Spark Tables for the use of the referee (although he uses the term Conductor). These are simply a few d20 tables sprinkled with setting-appropriate terms to act as inspiration when you need something to kick start the imagination. When my own game prep process of staring out the window and drinking coffee fails me, I resort to similar measures. After all, if someone has a good idea then I'm all about stealing it (and implying that it is my own work, ha).

I saw these particular tables, or early versions of them, used at Dragonmeet a couple of years ago when we pressured Chris into running a game for us with zero notice. He'd brought a manuscript of Electric Bastionland to show around at the con and after a few minutes of reading it and being long-time fans of its forerunner, Into the Odd, we coerced Chris into running it there and then. He took a few moments to sketch out a map and rolled on two spark tables for each location, combining the results into something Bastion-appropriate for us to encounter. Then we were off and a good time was had.

Using random tables to provide GM inspiration is as old as the hobby itself, and it's the sort of thing that I find most useful on my own prep. I'd rather create a tool for a specific session or campaign that I can reference again later than devise some specific story twist for this week's game. The latter are better developed at the gaming table during play in any case. Of course, you could always use something designed for this very purpose such as the Tome of Adventure Design by Matt Finch. This is filled with tables, and while it has an old school D&D bent, there's a ton of material and it's not really system or setting specific. Setting-specific stuff is good,

though, and at its best when you come up with it yourself to match the content and style of your own games.

To that end, I'm including two spark tables written for use with my own Dragon Warriors campaign. These were written back when we were still in Albion and are somewhat less useful now that the PCs are up to their necks in strife and woe in the Principalities of the Crusades.

Oh, and get Electric Bastionland. It's really good.

Roll d20 as many times as you like on each table, combining the results to gain elements of inspiration for this week's game.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Cobwebs	11	Faerie
2	Crumbling castle	12	Hollow hill
3	Twilight	13	Mere
4	Moss	14	Hunger
5	Rain	15	Rust
6	Mud	16	Stone ring or henge
7	Shadow	17	Cairn
8	Forest	18	Birds
9	Revenant	19	Iron
10	Ivy covered stone	20	Haunt

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Sorcery	11	Heresy
2	Execution	12	Black magic
3	The church	13	Mercenaries
4	Tournament/disputation	14	Bones
5	Crypts/tomb	15	Abandoned chapel
6	Statue	16	Charcoal burners
7	Thorns	17	Plague
8	Beasts	18	Death rituals
9	Horns	19	Runes
10	Graves	20	Hunt

The Serpopard

Paul Partington

We made our way through a square archway to a wide gallery with sandstone walls and a floor of white marble. Before we could progress further, we had to deal with the creature lurking here. A huge cat-like animal, with light brown fur and black spots sat in the middle of the gallery. Its long serpent-like neck ended in the head of a great cat, with draconic ears and mouth and ferociously sharp teeth. "A serpopard!" exclaimed my companion. "Not seen one of these for a while!" Initially, it sat unmoving as if transfixed in place, but as we stepped through the archway it wasted no time in bounding to attack.

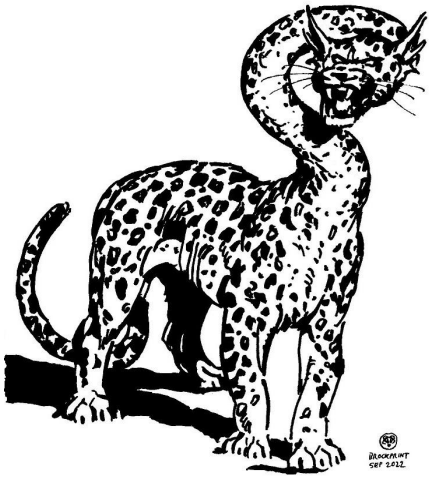
Coradian scholars named this creature because it has features of both a serpent and a leopard.[1] The serpopard is a rare creature native to desert regions, particularly the Kaikuruhan Desert. The superstitious view it as a cursed creature, abandoned by the gods to wander the desert; however, the god-kings were known to keep serpopards as pets or guards.

The serpopard can grow to four metres in length and about a metre in height, although the neck adds a further metre.

The serpopard is a nocturnal beast, preferring to hunt at night when it is cooler and when it can go undetected under the cover of darkness. Male serpopards tend to attack with their teeth, while females favour their claws. Their favoured prey is small rodents and lizards, although it is not unknown for serpopards to attack humans and humanoids. They will not be deliberately violent towards intelligent species but will attack if they are hungry or defending their territory.

[1] The name given the creature by the ancient Kaikuhurans is lost to time.

Young serpopards can be trained to act as guard creatures by Kaikuhurun Barbarians of at least 8th Rank or those with the advanced Survival (desert) skill.



Serpopards are usually solitary creatures, although they can be found as a mating pair. After birth, the male leaves and the female teaches the cubs how to hunt and survive in the desert. Young serpopards leave the mother when they feel capable of surviving on their own. Mated pairs can communicate telepathically and, although they don't stay together, can find each other again during the next mating season.

Serpopards are fascinated with ancient ruins found in deserts, such as old tombs or temples, and will go out of their way to explore such places. It is not unheard of for adventurers to encounter a serpopard inside such a building and find themselves under attack by a territorial serpopard…

Serpopards can travel great distances across deserts, using an innate form of Teleport at will (as per the Mystic spell, effectively jumping up to 100m at a time), although this only works outside and in sandy desert areas.

ATTACK 18,
DEFENCE 10
MAGICAL DEFENCE 7
EVASION 6
Health Points 2d6+12

Bite (d6, 4) or Claws x2 (d8, 3)
Armour Factor 1
Movement 10m (20m)
Stealth 15, Perception 7 (panoptical)
Rank-equivalent: 4th

Number encountered: usually 1
Treasure: none, unless guarding a Pharaoh's tomb…

The Wychblade

Lance Stapleton

An ornate, foot-long bronze dagger, forged thousands of years ago when Balor first came to rule the earth. It is leaf shaped, inscribed with glyphs and green with corrosion, but its golden edge is keen and deadly sharp. It is mundanely a +1 short sword (d8 + 1, 4 points); however, at the nights of the new moon, it possesses a more gruesome power.

In game terms, it acts as a Virus Lunare potion. Any being slain at this time in front of an unholy altar with the wychblade will have a portion of their soul trapped within their corpse. The altar requires 28 MP or a human sacrifice per lunar month to sustain its power. If the wielder then casts *Reanimate The Dead* and buries the body in a shallow grave, the corpse will arise as a perpetual zombie at the next full moon (14 days later). The spell in the wychblade can be used to create zombie animals/monsters as well as undead humans.

The owner of the blade is susceptible to a curse each new moon with a strength of MA 20. Every year that the blade is owned confers one random madness on the human user. Faerie or Trollkin, such as Hags, Redcaps, Boggarts, Trolls, Hobgoblins, and even Dark Elves, are immune to the madness and curse.

The Convent of Saint Ashanax

Shaun Hately

The Convent of Saint Ashanax occupies one of the oldest buildings in Ongus — a rare survivor of the period when the city was a northern outpost of the Selentine Empire. It is a solid and impressive structure rising three floors from a site at the intersection of five separate roadways in the southwest corner of the Ward of Groverest.

Until less than a decade ago, the Capstone Guild (see Dragon Warriors Players Guide, p.29) used this building as their Guild Hall within Ongus, before moving to their new purpose-built hall to the south of the city, and many were surprised when that avaricious organisation handed this building to the Order of Saint Ashanax, lock, stock, and bridle, without any charge.

Saint Ashanax is the patron saint of wayfarers and travellers, having led a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands from Albion about three hundred years ago. He did not lose a single pilgrim from among the two hundred who he led from Albion to Ibrahim and back but died of illness and exhaustion within a day of the pilgrimage's return to Albish soil.

During the earliest days of the Crusade, it was not uncommon for the wives of some of the noble lords leading the Crusade to accompany their husbands to the Holy Lands — to begin with, many believed the Crusade would face little resistance in the face of the obvious righteousness of its cause. The Order of Saint Ashanax was established by certain widows of some of those recently slain Crusaders who dedicated themselves to providing medical care to those who needed it in memory of their husbands (and often their sons), and in honour of Saint Ashanax. They educated themselves as physicians in the face of opposition from some sections of

the Church, and with the enthusiastic support of others. They have established hospitals throughout the Holy Land, where all who need treatment can find it, and while they have not entirely discarded the ancient ideas of medicine passed down from the Emphidian and Selentine sources where they have found they have worked, they have also embraced many new ideas, when they find them of value, even risking accusations of heresy by being all too willing to learn from the greatest scholars of Ta'ashim medicine. Over the last few decades, they have begun building hospitals further and further north, and the Convent of Saint Ashanax in Ongus is one of these hospitals — one that is rapidly acquiring a reputation as the place to go if you wish the best possible, non-magical chance of surviving illness or injury.

Most people believe the women who run this convent and hospital are Nuns — that is not strictly true. They call themselves Oblates, and they take their oaths for only a year at a time — some will renew these oaths for their entire life, but an Oblate is free to leave the Order if they wish, and there are already a few women practising as private physicians in Ongus who gained their training as Oblates of Saint Ashanax. This has caused concern among the universally male Guild of Barber Surgeons, but the Guildmaster himself is a relatively enlightened man who would rather cooperate with the Order than conflict with it.

The Superior of the Convent is Sister Carida, a woman in her mid-sixties with a dignified and inspiring manner. At any given time, there are about a dozen sisters in total whose skills range from basic nursing, all the way up to highly competent surgeons and apothecaries, and a similar number of girls serving as novices and apprentices. There are also at least a couple of sisters who seem to wear maille and bear swords under their habits — former Lady Knights who ensure things remain peaceful within the convent walls.

The convent is built of Selentine brick. Most will enter via a heavy double door that brings a person into a room lined with cots where the Sister in attendance can provide initial care and decide whether a person needs to be admitted for treatment. Nobody is ever refused entry, and all are treated according to their need. A fee is levied on discharge based primarily on a person's ability to pay — it can be as little as a single copper penny, or as much as hundreds in gold. Off this lobby is one where surgery can be performed when necessary. There is a chapel next to this lobby and doors leading further into the building. Beyond those doors are a kitchen (which serves the needs of both patients and Oblates with nourishing soups), a laundry — the Oblates are great believers in cleanliness — a store room for linens, and two small wards — one for the use of men and one for women (although the Oblates ever practical nature means that they will not leave a bed empty if a person needs it, simply because that person is not of the requisite gender — it is something of a running joke in Ongus that the Oblates of Saint Ashanax are respecters of nobody's privacy or modesty in the face of medical need. A narrow annex (that rises the same three floors as the main building) accommodates a library dedicated to medical and other useful books — on this floor there is a desk at which a Sister can often be found making copies of important works. There is a staircase to the cellars (described later), a well shaft that climbs the entire building, and a spiral staircase that provides access to higher floors.

The first floor above contains two more, normally sex-segregated wards, and private rooms for patients. There is another room for storing clean linen, and the annex is dedicated to the apothecary's art - medicines are prepared here, according to both ancient custom where such custom has not been proven worthless, and new treatments are explored. The Oblates make great use of honey as a base for medicines and as a substance to be spread under dressings as they believe it can help to prevent wounds from festering. There is a storeroom for medicines that have been prepared.

The second floor is the living quarters of the Oblates. Novices have a dormitory here (although some are allowed to return to their families in the city each night) but the sisters live in single cells, simple but comfortable. Sister Carida has a small suite of rooms. There is a solid vault attached to this room, in which the valuables of the Convent are stored, including an extremely powerful relic, the upper-left leg bone of Saint Ashanax. The Oblates, in general, and Sister Carida in particular, prefer to rely on non-religious methods of treating illness and injury, and non-magical ones as well — this is largely because they believe that these methods can be taught and learned more readily than others and so spread more easily. But they do not completely oppose these approaches, and in extremis, the relic may be tried — nobody within the Order is known to have any magical abilities, but it is not completely unknown for them to be associated with those who are. The annex on this floor is a room where novices may study.

On top of the building and accessed by the spiral staircase is a dome constructed of a lead-and-iron framework set with hundreds of thin sheets of horn that admit light. Beneath this dome, a herb garden has been planted with those herbs that are known (or at least strongly believed) to have medicinal value.

The cellar of the building contains entrances to the ancient Selentine sewer system of Ongus — this building was originally used to manage those sewers during the Selentine period. The room is kept scrupulously clean — there is a large bathing pool here, and also the latrinas for the use of those living or staying in the convent. Ancient machinery, maintained by the Capstone Guild, remains here, but the Order has added an icehouse where bodies of the recently departed can be kept pending their final disposition. A trap door in the ceiling provides lift access to the street outside the convent door for moving heavy objects to and from the cellar.

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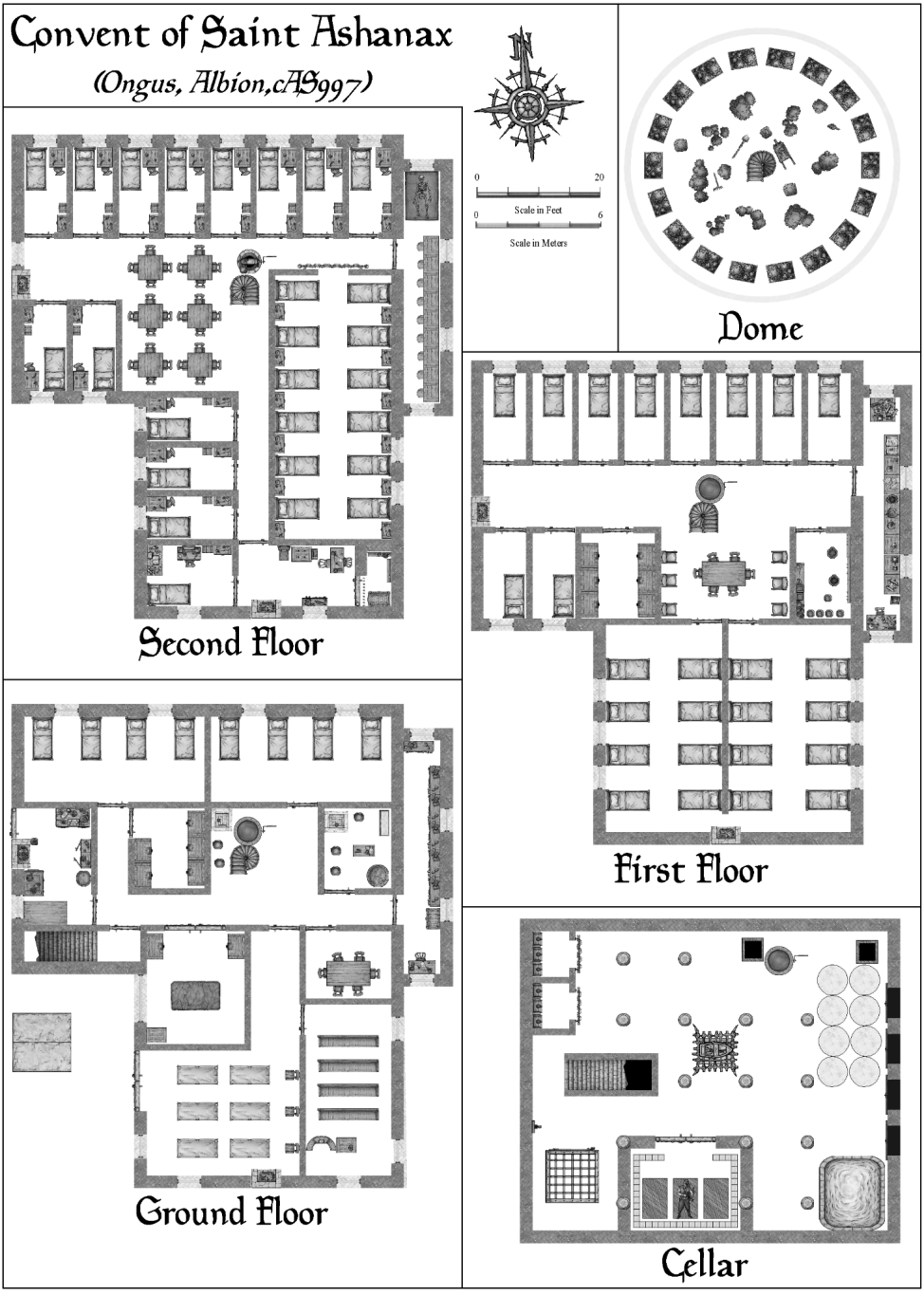
Eikki's Puukko

Christian Hagga

An old Mercanian tale, the Saga of Eikki Valkonien, tells the story of a young trapper who returned home from a winter collecting furs to find his village razed and its people killed or enslaved by the army of the Krarthian Warlock-Lord, Jzardek the Scourge of the West. The Saga describes how, over the course of seven years, Eikki Valkonien lived in the wilderness, planning his revenge against Jzardek and hunting the warlord's apprentices. It tells of Eikki's many deeds of courage and cunning during this time. In return for saving a forest spirit from Jzardek's greatest apprentice, she imbued Eikki's puukko knife — a Mercanian forester's most important tool — with great magical power to aid his hunt against sorcery-wielding enemies. The saga later tells how Eikki confronted Jzardek at the top of a great cliff, using the puukko to cut through the Warlock's sorcerous attacks before plunging the knife into his eye and hurling him to his death, hundreds of metres below.

Eikki's Puukko is a simple-looking, single-edged knife with a blade under four inches long. The maple handle is capped with a reindeer antler pommel (from Eikki's first kill during a hunt), and its simple sheath is made from the hide of the same animal. The pommel is engraved with Old Mercanian runes meaning simply "This knife belongs to Eikki". As well as being an ideal knife for crafting in the wilderness, it holds an incredible edge and its magic guides the wielder in battle; it functions as a +2 weapon (1d4 + 2, 5 points). Further, the enchantment placed upon the puukko by the nature spirit confers specific benefits to an owner who is 'beloved of nature' (GM's discretion, but this may include many herders, trappers, shepherds, foresters, druids, and of course, characters of the Hunter profession). Such wielders gain a +2 Magical Defence and ignore the first 4 points of damage caused by spells, so long as their hand is on the knife's handle.



http://www.libraryofhiabuor.net/AshanaxConvent.html